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Victorian community health dentists stop work to demand fair pay



Community health dentists 24-hour work stoppage on 17 September 2018

Victorian dentists employed in community health centres (CHCs) are making a significant stand against unfair pay and working conditions by stopping work on 17 September for 24 hours and holding a demonstration at Parliament House at 12pm.

This comes after extensive negotiations over 15 months have failed to produce an offer for community dentists that is comparable to an in-principle agreement for hospital dentists that was achieved in June 2018.

In Victoria, dentists have never stopped work or participated in a demonstration of this scale. Dr Vinitha Soosaipillai, a community health dentist and public health advocate, will be taking part in the work stoppage. Dr Soosaipillai said, "It's time to take a strong stand against unfair pay and working conditions for dentists employed in community health centres. My colleagues and I deserve the recognition and respect for the work we do, and we demand that our vulnerable at-risk patients are taken seriously by the Victorian Government."

"At the very least, our pay and working conditions should be comparable to our hospital colleagues. We treat the same vulnerable Victorians presenting with complex needs and we are passionate about and committed to improving the oral health of the community," Dr Soosaipillai said.

The ADAVB has consistently voiced that Victoria's public dental system is in crisis. Dentists employed in Victorian community health centres are the lowest paid public sector dentists in Australia and an interactive map released by the ADAVB in August 2018, exposed the average public dental care waiting time in Victorian is 20 months, an increase of 67 per cent over the past three years. The wait is a staggering three to four years in some electorates.

ADAVB President Dr Kevin Morris said that the strike action was a necessary step in a protracted and frustrating journey. "Our public dental system is in a state of decay. It is under-resourced and under-funded, and we are not retaining experienced clinicians. Waiting lists have blown out. Vulnerable Victorians are languishing on public dental lists, resulting in a never-ending cycle of pain and suffering for patients. We have been negotiating on behalf of our members for over 15 months, however no formal offer has been presented.

"Our community centre employed dentists deserve a comparable offer to their hospital colleagues. A strong, fair and sustainable public dental system is vital for the entire dental profession and the Victorian community. This action highlights the critical role that dentists play in health care and promotes the important connection of oral health with overall health and wellbeing."

Community health centres involved in the work stoppage on Monday 17 September are:

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- Merri Health
- EACH
- Co-Health
- Your Community Health
- Dianella and Plenty Valley Community Health
- North Richmond Community Health
- IPC Health
- Connect Health and Community
- Healthability and Carrington Health
- Link Health and Community
- Inspiro
- La Trobe Community Health Service

Anyone can attend the public demonstration on the steps of Parliament House at 12pm.

Note to the Editor:

- The Australian Dental Association Victorian Branch (ADAVB) is the peak Victorian professional body representing over 3500 Victorian registered dentists and dentistry students.
- The ADAVB is a not-for-profit professional membership organisation that aims to improve the oral health of Victorians, promotes the highest standards of professional dental care and supports and represents the dental profession.
- The ADAVB has been working with Professionals Australia to improve the pay and working conditions of Victoria's public dentists.
- [FAQ 24-hour work stoppage](#) – Why are we taking action? Who can participate in the 24-hour stoppage? Will patients be affected?
- [ADAVB interactive map of public waiting times](#) – Find waiting times and oral health data in every Victorian electorate.

Media enquiries:

Media interviews are available with ADAVB President, Dr Kevin Morris, ADAVB CEO A/Prof Matthew Hopcraft and community health dentist, Dr Vinitha Soosaipillai.

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